adequately catering to the needs of Delhi/New Delhi/Nizamuddin-Jhansi passengers.

(c) At present, there is no proposal to extend 2179/2180 Nizamuddin-Gwalior Taj Express upto Jhansi due to operational and resource constraints.

Regulatory Authority for Pricing and Distribution of Steel

989. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are seriously considering a proposal to appoint a regulator to look at the pricing and distribution issues of steel sector; and

(b) if so, how the proposed National Steel Regulatory Commission would ensure that the consumers face no shortage of steel and get it at reasonable price?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) and (b) In the 18th National Steel Consumers' Council meeting held in June, 2004 some consumers suggested formation of a National Steel Regulatory Body for keeping a check on steel prices. Since steel prices have been stable for the last few months. An independent regulatory body at this stage is not felt necessary. The price situation is being regularly monitored and Government may intervene, if necessary.

Concession in steel imports

†990. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had given concession in the import of steel in order to control the prices of steel;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what had been its impact on prices of steel; and

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) the quantum of steel exported during the year 2003-04 and the percentage increase in steel prices in the country on this account?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) (a) and (b) The Government has taken the following measures in recent months to help reduce the landed cost of imported steel;

(i) The customs duty on non-alloy steel was reduced from 15% to 10% in the Union Budget 2004-05 and has been further reduced to 5% in August 2004.

(ii) The customs duty on alloy steel has been reduced from 15% to 10% in the Union Budget 2004-05.

(iii) The customs duty on refractory raw materials has been reduced from 20% to 15% in the Union Budget 2004-05.

(iv) The customs duty on melting scrap has been brought down to "Zero" in August 2004.

(v) The customs duty on ships for breaking has been brought down from 15% to 5% in August 2004.

Even before the announcement of the Union Budget 2004-05, Government had taken certain measures to ease imports which *inter-alia* included:—

(i) Abolition of 4% Special Additional Duty (SAD) on imports;

(ii) Lowering customs duty on several raw materials like coal, coke, nickel, refractories, pig iron and sponge iron;

(iii) The requirement of mandatory certification of imported steel materials by the Bureau of Indian Standards under DGFT's notification No. 44 dated 24.11.2000 had been removed for 33 critical steel items *vide* Notification No. 21 dated 29.10.2003. This was done to ease the supply of these inputs to downstream processors by providing them unimpeded option of import.

(c) The steel prices have generally remained stable since August 2004 when the Government announced a cut in import duty rates. However, the prices of most categories of steel increased marginally in October 2004 mainly due to the global conditions and domestic revival in

construction and other steel related activities in the country after the expiry of the monsoon months.

(d) During 2003-04 India exported 4.835 million tonnes of finished steel showing a growth of 7.3% over the pevious year. However, during the same period, production of finished steel at 36.957 million tonnes also showed a growth of 9.7% over the previous year. Hence, it would not be correct to assume that the steel prices in the domestic market have risen due to rise in exports since exports are normally made out of surplus production. Domestic market prices generally follow international prices and are guided by the landed cost of Imports.

New Steel Policy

991. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to formulate new steel policy;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how far this policy would help to contain domestic cost, check price volatility and encourage exports?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has formulated a draft National Steel Policy (NSP), which targets a production of over 100 million tonnes by 2020. The draft policy was considered by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) who desired that it may be examind by a Committee of Secretaries under Cabinet Secretary and also posted at the website of Ministry of Steel to elicit public opinion.

(c) The basic objective of the NSP is to create enabling conditions for the globally integrated Indian steel industry and to expand its production base adequately in response to the anticipated increase in domestic and overseas demand in the coming decade. On the demand side the proposed policy seeks to bring supply in line with demand and seeks to create incremental demand for steel. On the supply side it